

The Renewal Alliance



Mission Statement

The mission of the Renewal Alliance is to build a partnership between government and the community-based, nonprofit organizations to promote real solutions to human problems. As a bicameral planning group in Congress, the Renewal Alliance partners and consults with grassroots groups to advance an agenda, and communicate a vision of economic and cultural renewal through private organizations. Membership in the Alliance will not require endorsement of specific legislation. But the Alliance will promote legislative initiatives targeted at community renewal, economic empowerment, and educational opportunities for low-income families.

The members of the Renewal Alliance are convinced that encouraging economic development and promoting effective, private compassion are complementary goals. These goals are central to the Renewal Alliance's message, and we urge the Congress to consider these initiatives as a matter of first priority.

The Renewal Alliance



Members List

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Spencer Abraham
John Ashcroft
Sam Brownback
Dan Coats
Paul Coverdell
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Rod Grams
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The Renewal Alliance



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The Renewal Alliance

Legislative Agenda

REAL Life for America's Urban Families and Communities

Introduction

We live in an era of unprecedented prosperity. Steady economic growth and low inflation are yielding some of the best economic times for America. Sadly, the rising tide of prosperity is leaving many behind. Millions of our fellow citizens who live in the inner cities continue to be swamped by social breakdown, economic decline, and educational failure. We believe this urban crisis, this affliction that has the greatest effect on the poorest among us, demands a national response that encourages local reform efforts.

For more than three decades, the federal government has tried to rebuild urban areas from the top down. Liberals declared war on poverty—and poverty won. The Renewal Alliance has rejected the failed model of the past that combined too much money with too little wisdom, and wreaked devastation in inner-city communities. We have also rejected the “hands-off” approach that believes the best federal urban policy is no policy at all.

In the place of the failed past, and a “go-it-alone” future, the Renewal Alliance offers “REAL Life”—Renewal, Empowerment, Achievement and Learning. Our initiative acknowledges a federal role, but makes the government a junior partner to local leaders and institutions. REAL Life has three key elements:

Community Renewal

- Restoring authority and resources to religious, non-profit, and volunteer groups that seek to reweave the social fabric of inner-city neighborhoods.

Economic Empowerment

- Targeting tax and regulatory relief, and savings incentives to restore the shattered economies of inner-city neighborhoods.

Educational Opportunities for Low-Income Families

- Empowering families and schools through publicly-funded scholarships, and regulatory relief to improve education for children living in urban America.

We believe that by concentrating on the renewal of community institutions, economic empowerment, and educational reform, we can help the inner cities gain their share of America's prosperity.

The Renewal Alliance

REAL Life: An Opportunity Agenda for Urban America

It is clear from the range and complexity of problems plaguing the inner cities that capital development—social, human and economic—is the key to real, long-term renewal of urban communities. Our plan addresses this problem at three levels.

Community Renewal



Community activist Bob Woodson has said that there is no social problem in America today that is not being solved somewhere by someone. Our most intractable pathologies—drug addiction, teen pregnancy, homelessness, and youth violence—are each being conquered by community organizations most of us have never heard of, but whose expertise we cannot afford to ignore. William Schambra called these institutions “the emergency rooms of civil society.” While government programs often send their clients through a revolving door of dysfunction, these private, faith-based efforts offer real help and hope for restoring individuals to productive lives. Pastor Freddie Garcia of San Antonio operates a drug treatment program that has an 80 percent success rate compared to the single-digit performance of government programs. An independent study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters found that among at-risk youth, adult mentoring cut first-time drug use by 46 percent, school absenteeism by 52 percent, and violent behavior by one-third.

Renewal Credit

- Voluntary, state-based charity tax credit.
- States permitted to use up to 50 percent of any existing federal welfare block grants to fund charity tax credits.
- Tax credit provided for contributions up to \$250 (\$500 for married couples) to 501(c)(3) charitable organizations, which work to prevent or reduce poverty.
- The credit would be phased in at \$50 per year (\$100 for married couples).

Charitable Donations Protection

- Prevents the recapture of tithes and monetary donations given more than one year before an individual files for bankruptcy.
- Protects a debtor’s donations to churches and charities for up to 15 percent of annual gross income during the year the contribution is made.
- Protects up to 15 percent of debtor’s gross income from creditors after bankruptcy filed.
- Preserves the right of individuals to tithe and give charitably while they repay their debts.

Charity Liability Reform

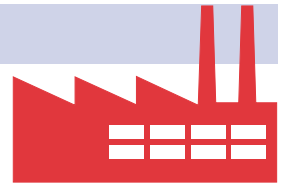
This initiative limits the civil liability of businesses and other entities that:

- Donate equipment.
- Allow charitable organizations to use their facilities for meeting space.
- Make motor vehicles or aircraft available to nonprofits.
- Offer facility tours.

We propose a package of reforms that will strengthen the churches, charities, and volunteer groups that bind communities together, and heal individual lives. We want to continue the work of the 1996 welfare reform by encouraging states to transfer more authority and resources to the private, religious, and non-profit groups through a state-based charity tax credit. The community empowerment initiative also builds on the 1997 Volunteer Protection Act by limiting the liability of businesses and other entities that provide equipment or facilities used by charitable organizations. Finally, we protect institutions from the over-zealous Internal Revenue Service agents who have in the past sought to recoup contributions from individuals who are going through bankruptcy proceedings.

For too long the government has treated America’s civil society as, at best, a quaint reminder of a lost past and, more often, as an obstruction to government-led social progress. REAL Life seeks to put these civil society institutions and the people who lead them at the center of our effort to restore troubled neighborhoods and communities.

Economic Empowerment



The second part of REAL Life is targeted at restoring the shattered economic base of our inner cities. Economic growth provides a double benefit to communities. First and foremost are the jobs that yield income both to support families and nurture self-respect. But there is also a civil society dividend for urban neighborhoods that attract new businesses. In 1997, American Demographics published a study that found a strong relationship between the presence of healthy businesses and social stability. Entrepreneurs depend upon the social health of the neighborhoods where they operate and, therefore, support the network of religious, and volunteer groups that hold communities together. Further, the presence of locally owned and operated restaurants, barber shops, and stores provides “a place for the informal public life that embeds people in communities.”

It is one of the great under-reported stories of America’s booming economy that tight national labor markets are increasingly driving business to look to the inner cities for employees. In Wisconsin, Allen-Edmonds shoes moved a major facility from Port Washington to inner-city Milwaukee to take advantage of the untapped labor pool there. The city of Indianapolis is engaged in an aggressive program to bring

businesses into poor neighborhoods by reducing taxes and regulation. Philadelphia, after decades of losing thousands of jobs each year to suburban locations, reported a 3,000 job increase in 1997 mostly because of efforts to make the city a more attractive place to do business.

REAL Life seeks to build on this trend by targeting the 100 poorest communities in the nation, and offering economic growth incentives. The legislation reduces to zero the capital gains tax for investments in troubled areas, increases small business expensing of plant and equipment purchases in the zones, and allows businesses in the zones to receive a 20 percent wage credit for hiring qualified, low-income workers. To qualify for these benefits, states and localities must agree to reduce local tax rates and fees within the renewal community, and waive local and state occupational licensing regulations. The proposal would also create Family Development Accounts that encourage

Renewal Communities Requirements

Poverty Criteria

- Must have a poverty rate of 20 percent or more
- The unemployment rate must be at least 150 percent of the national rate
- At least 70 percent of Renewal Community households must have incomes below 80 percent of the median household income.

Local Commitments

- Reduce local tax rates and fees within renewal zones
- Eliminate state and local sales taxes
- Waive local and state occupational licensing regulations, and other barriers to entry, except those explicitly needed to protect health and safety.

Renewal Community Benefits

- Capital Gains Tax Relief. Zero capital gains rate for the sale of any qualified zone stock, business property, or partnership interest located within the qualified zones.
- Increased Expensing. Raises the maximum allowable expensing for purchase of plant and equipment in Renewal Communities from \$25,000 to \$35,000 in 2003.
- Wage Credit. 20 percent wage credit for hiring qualified, low-income workers who remain employed for at least six months.
- Family Development Accounts. Tax-favored accounts to help low-income families save a portion of their income or their EITC credit refund. Cash donations to an FDA are deductible, and withdrawals are tax-free for a qualified purpose.
- Brownfields Expansion. Environmental clean-up relief applies to Renewal Communities in addition to the Enterprise Zones, Empowerment Communities, Census poverty tracks, and EPA pilot projects.
- Renewal Community Homeownership. HUD-owned, unoccupied or substandard homes and housing projects located within qualified zones to be sold to community development corporations for purchase by low-income families.
- Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) Credit. Allows financial institutions to receive their CRA credit for investments in, or loans to, other ventures with community development financial institutions located in Renewal Communities.

low-income families to save a portion of their income, or their Earned Income Tax Credit refund, to be matched by private contributions. These accounts would be available to purchase a home, pay educational expenses, or create a small business. We think this program is good business—and good social policy—because it acknowledges “self-help” and private investment as the first principles of effective compassion.

Educational Opportunities for Low-Income Families



The third part of our program is educational choice for low-income families. A recent survey on urban education by “Education Week” re-emphasized the alarming state of urban schools. Nationwide, just 43 percent of students attending urban schools met the most minimal standard for reading competency. In schools located in high poverty areas, more than two-thirds of the children could not read a simple child’s book. This pattern held true in math and science as well.

Urban parents whose children are trapped in schools in which failure is virtually guaranteed are increasingly demanding real change, and real alternatives. Publicly- and privately-financed scholarship programs are now operating in over 30 cities. Last year, these programs raised over \$30 million, and served 10,000 children. The demand for private school choice also continues to grow. In late 1997, the Washington Scholarship Fund in Washington, D.C., announced that it would offer 1,000 new scholarships. The Fund received 7,000 applications for these positions—more than 15 percent of the District’s eligible population. In 1996, New York City’s private scholarship program received more than 17,000 applications for 1,000 new slots.

Early studies of publicly- and privately-financed school choice programs demonstrate that there is good reason for parents of poor children to seek alternatives to the public school system. Studies of the Milwaukee and Cleveland public scholarship programs, by Harvard Professor Paul Peterson, show significant improvements in academic achievement for program participants—especially in math ability. Moreover, these studies also show a sharp increase in parental satisfaction with their children’s learning environment.

Opportunity Scholarships

- Uses Title VI funds in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
- Eligible families must have incomes at or below 185 percent of the poverty rate.
- Scholarships may be used for tuition at any private, public, or religious school located in an impoverished neighborhood.
- The state or local choice program would be means-tested.
- Scholarship value will not exceed the per pupil expenditure in the participating locality.
- The scholarship cannot be less than 60 percent of the per pupil expenditure or the cost of the private tuition, whichever is less.
- Private and religious schools that accept scholarship students would not be interfered with by the federal government.

Education Flexibility Waivers

- States may waive a variety of requirements in the local educational agency (LEA) in the state.
- Waivers of federal education regulations would be available on an expedited basis to any district that engages in a private school choice program.

REAL Life acknowledges these gains, and seeks to build upon them. First, this legislation calls for a large-scale test of publicly-funded scholarships for poor children. In the short term, we believe these scholarships will provide some immediate relief for families. In the longer term, school choice will reinvigorate public school reforms. As families begin to shop for schools that work, pressure will grow for public school administrators and teachers to undertake long-delayed reforms in school operations, curriculum, and teacher training.

The second part of our education reform plan is aimed at relieving the regulatory burden faced by urban public schools. Administrators routinely complain that although the federal government provides only a fraction of overall education funding, it imposes an overwhelming majority of the paperwork. Our bill would provide an “Ed-flex” waiver for urban school districts that will permit them to devote more of their dollars and time to classroom instruction and less to filling out forms.



The Renewal Alliance ***for America's Urban Families & Communities***

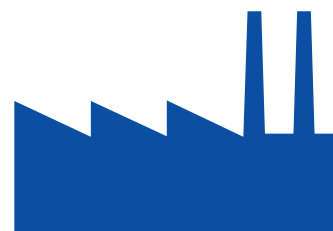
Community Renewal

- State-based Charity Tax Credit
- Charitable Donations Protection
- Liability Reform



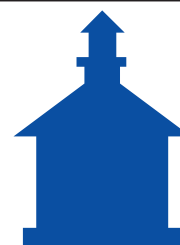
Economic Empowerment

- 100 designated Renewal Communities
- Capital gains tax relief
- Increased expensing
- Wage credit
- Family Development Accounts
- Brownfields expansion
- Renewal Community home-ownership
- Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) Credit



Educational Opportunities for Low-Income Families

- Publicly-funded private school scholarships
- Regulatory Flexibility for public schools



Detailed Legislative Description

Community Renewal



Renewal Credit

The REAL Life Renewal Credit would permit states to use up to 50 percent of any existing federal welfare block grants to fund charity tax credits. States would be able to design their tax credit within broad federal guidelines. The program is entirely voluntary; states are not required to adopt a tax credit. If they do, they can specify the welfare-related block grants that would be affected. States would be able to provide a tax credit for contributions up to \$250 (\$500 for married couples) to 501(c)(3) charitable organizations, which work to prevent or reduce poverty. The credit would be phased in at \$50 per year (\$100 for married couples).

For example, assume that California establishes a charity tax credit funded out of Social Services Block Grant funds. Further, assume that in the first year this California charity tax credit results in California residents contributing \$10 million to 501(c)(3) organizations providing poverty-reducing services to California residents. The state government would then be able to use \$10 million from their Social Services Block Grant to restore the \$10 million reduced state tax receipts.

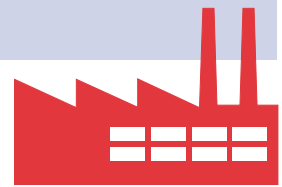
Charitable Donations Protection

This section protects tithes, and charitable contributions from being recaptured by bankruptcy trustees if the donor has declared bankruptcy. Specifically, the legislation would prevent bankruptcy trustees from recapturing tithes, and monetary donations given more than one year before an individual files for bankruptcy. This provision will protect a debtor's donations to charitable organizations, including churches, for up to 15 percent of annual gross income during the year the contribution is made. Further, it will continue to protect up to 15 percent of gross income from creditors after an individual files for bankruptcy. This legislation also preserves the right of individuals to tithe, and give charitably while they repay their debts after filing bankruptcy under Chapter 13.

Charity Liability Reform

This initiative limits the civil liability of businesses that donate equipment, allow their facilities to be used (for meeting space), make motor vehicles or aircraft available to nonprofits, or offer facility tours.

Economic Empowerment



The REAL Life economic empowerment initiative would create 100 Renewal Communities with targeted, pro-growth tax benefits, regulatory relief, savings accounts, Brownfields clean-up and home ownership opportunities. Renewal Communities must meet the following requirements:

- **Poverty Rates.** A community must have a poverty rate of 20 percent or more, an unemployment rate of at least 150 percent of the national rate, and at least 70 percent of households must have incomes below 80 percent of the median household income.
- **Local Commitments.** The Renewal Communities must commit to:
 1. reduce local tax rates and fees within renewal zones, and to eliminate state and local sales taxes; and
 2. waive local and state occupational licensing regulations, and other barriers to entry, except those explicitly needed to protect health and safety.

Qualifying communities would receive the following benefits:

- **Capital Gains Tax Relief.** The bill establishes a capital gains rate of zero for the sale of any qualified zone stock, business property, or partnership interest located within the qualified zones. The stock, property, and partnership interest must have been held for at least five years.
- **Increased Expensing.** Raises the maximum allowable expensing to purchase physical plants and equipment in Renewal Communities from \$25,000 to \$35,000 in 2003.
- **Wage Credit.** Businesses located in qualified zones would receive a 20 percent wage credit for hiring qualified, low-income workers who remain employed for at least six months.
- **Family Development Accounts.** Family Development Accounts (FDA) are designed to encourage low-income families to save a portion of their income or their EITC credit refund. Cash donations are deductible, even if the individual does not itemize, while withdrawals are tax-free if used for a qualified purpose (purchase a home, pay tuition, cover emergency health care costs, or create a small business).

The FDA accounts may be matched by public and private funds to help low-income families build family assets, and become independent from government programs. Matches could be provided by local churches, service organizations, corporations, foundations, and state or local governments.

- **Brownfields Expansion.** Ensures that Brownfields environmental clean-up relief applies to Renewal Communities, as well as the Enterprise Zones, Empowerment Communities, Census poverty tracks, and EPA pilot projects that were included in the Balance Budget Act of 1997.
- **Renewal Community Homeownership.** Provides for the sale of HUD-owned, unoccupied or substandard homes, and housing projects that are located within qualified zones. These properties would be sold to community development corporations to provide housing opportunities to low-income families.
- **Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) Credit.** Amends section 804 of the CRA to allow financial institutions to receive their CRA credit for investments in, or loans to, other ventures with community development financial institutions as defined by the Bank Enterprise Act of 1991, and which are located within Renewal Communities.

Education Opportunities for Low-Income Families



Opportunity Scholarships

REAL Life opportunity scholarships tap Title VI funds in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to fund private school choice programs, primarily in hard-pressed, urban areas. Scholarships would go only to students whose families are at or below 185 percent of the poverty rate. The scholarship would be used to cover the cost of tuition at any private, public, or religious school located in the community where the child resides.

States and localities would be able to use existing funds under the Title VI “Innovation in Education” block grant of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which received \$310 million for FY 1997. The state or local choice program would be means-tested so that only parents with the lowest incomes would be eligible to receive scholarships for their children. The area in which a choice program would be run must be economically depressed and one of pervasive poverty.

The maximum value of the scholarship will not exceed the per pupil expenditure in that locality. The minimum amount cannot be less than 60 percent of the per pupil expenditure or the cost of the private tuition, whichever is less.

The bill states that private and religious schools that accept scholarship students would not be interfered with by the federal government.

Education Flexibility Waivers

This provision grants states the authority to waive a variety of requirements in the local educational agency (LEA) in the state. Waivers of federal regulations would be available on an expedited basis to any district that engages in a private school choice program.

The Renewal Alliance

Member Personal Statements

SENATOR SPENCE ABRAHAM

The 1996 Welfare Reform bill was an important first step in recognizing that states and localities are better suited to meet people's needs than the federal government. Now is the time to take the next step by promoting non-governmental solutions to human problems. Proposals that invite, encourage, and empower charities, families, churches, small businesses and community organizations to be more active in the hard essential work of social renewal help attain that goal. Not only does this mean expanding tax incentives for charitable work, but increasing the role played by faith-based organizations with proven track records. It means not just encouraging economic growth, but targeting that growth at distressed communities through enterprise zones and other incentives. Finally, it also means not just providing job training programs for the unemployed, but working with schools and employers to ensure that kids with high school diplomas have the skills necessary to get a good job.

SENATOR JOHN ASHCROFT

In 1996, Senator Ashcroft shepherded the Charitable Choice provision on the new welfare law through Congress. This landmark legislation allows charitable and faith-based organizations to become more involved in curing the social pathologies that plague our culture. Ashcroft has been named Chairman of the Republican Workplace Task Force in recognition of his leadership on S.4, the Family Friendly Workplace Act, a bill that would allow parents to better meet the responsibilities of work and home.

SENATOR SAM BROWNBACK

Compared to only thirty years ago, America's rates of violent crime, illegitimacy, family dissolution, and juvenile crime have reached unfathomable levels. It is incumbent upon us to address these indicators of cultural and social regression.

Opening the doors of opportunity requires a long-term commitment to strengthening families, improving schools, expanding job creation, encouraging entrepreneurship, reducing illegitimacy, and revitalizing the civil society institutions of charity, churches, volunteer groups, and community organizations. As a result, I have focused the work of the government oversight subcommittee I chair on strengthening (and removing government impediments to) the work of private charities, education reform, and adoption reform. By seeking to empower individuals and families instead government bureaucracies, the Renewal Alliance has made important progress in removing government impediments to the reinvigoration of civil society.

SENATOR DAN COATS

I agree with writer Michael Novak, who said, “The political party that best makes mediating structures the North Star of a new bipartisan agenda will dominate practical politics for the next 50 years.” The members of the Renewal Alliance intend to test that theory. The REAL Life legislative initiative will create a genuine partnership between the federal government and the private, religious and voluntary institutions that undergird the strength of local communities. This plan will encourage private and religious charities, revive urban economies and provide educational alternatives to low-income families whose children are trapped in dysfunctional schools. I believe REAL Life, by focusing on the need to restore the social, economic and human capital of impoverished urban neighborhoods will bring real opportunity to millions who are currently without hope for the future.

SENATOR PAUL COVERDELL

The Renewal Alliance represents an effort to return freedom to America’s families, communities, and citizens to do things important to them for their own well-being. Families and citizens cannot be truly free when the government takes, as it does today, over half their hard-earned wages. This severely impedes families’ ability to do those things they need to do and limits options available to earlier American families. My parents’ generation was able to keep about 80% of their wages, while today’s average family keeps only 45%. I want to reverse this stifling burden and have families and citizens keep—only as a beginning—over half their earnings.

CONGRESSMAN PHIL ENGLISH

Representative English is deeply committed to creating jobs and supporting efforts that strengthen communities in urban America. As a member of the Ways and Means Committee, Representative English was active in recrafting welfare policy in the 104th Congress. Sharing the vision of the Renewal Alliance, English believes that the next step in addressing our urban challenges is seeking ways to assist the revitalization initiatives of local communities and neighborhoods.

CONGRESSWOMAN KAY GRANGER

Kay Granger’s personal philosophy is simple—we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. She believes the keys to re-igniting the American flame in the future are found not in the halls of Congress but in city halls and town halls all across America. She believes by giving local communities the tools they need, they can create the neighborhoods they deserve. Her vision is one of a compassionate society where individuals matter, character counts, and people take care of themselves and each other. In short, Kay Granger believes we must all work together to ensure that America remains a place where people do well by doing good.

SENATOR CHUCK HAGEL

I believe the most important challenge facing society is to re-attach ourselves to a value system anchored by personal responsibility. Family, churches, synagogues, private and voluntary organizations are the foundations of a strong and vibrant nation. Values do count, and we must return to faith in God and the individual. We need to remember that our shared values are distilled from the broad tapestry of American life—from the many religions and traditions that are part of our shared culture. We must return to personal responsibility and limited government. Limited government respects private values; overpowering government undermines those values.

SENATOR TIM HUTCHINSON

Since his arrival in Congress, Tim Hutchinson has worked hard to change the “Washington-knows-best” approach to legislating; believing that states and localities are more effective than the federal government in crafting programs to meet the individual needs of its citizens. As a member of the 1996 Welfare Reform conference committee, Hutchinson fought hard for middle-class families by working to include a \$500 per child tax credit provision. Within days of being sworn in as the first popularly-elected Republican Senator from Arkansas, Hutchinson introduced stand-alone legislation that would provide permanent tax relief to all working American families through a \$500 per child tax credit. Now as a member of the Renewal Alliance, Hutchinson looks forward to initiating legislation that seeks to reduce governmental barriers and provide incentives to allow faith-based institutions and the private sector to help renew American society.

CONGRESSMAN JOHN KASICH

“I am very excited about REAL Life and it’s efforts to support the Charity Tax Credit. It plays a big part in getting people to work from their hearts and from their pockets at the same time. Both the economics and the love quotient are being put together in order to improve people’s lives in a real way. It is all about local solutions to local problems.

An example of this is The Charity Tax Credit. It was designed to encourage states to give tax credits (\$250 for individuals, \$500 for married couples) to people who contribute to a local charity. If you live in Columbus, Ohio and you want to help an organization which is involved with serving the poor, then you can give your check directly to that local charity organization.

This achieves several things. First, it gets you more involved in your community. Second, you are more likely to find out what’s going on with your local charity organizations. Third, it’s more direct. It gives you a better understanding of what’s going on so you can develop appropriate solutions in your community. Finally, states will have the flexibility to enact and run the program.”

CONGRESSMAN JOSEPH KNOLLENBERG

For too long, we have measured compassion by the amount of money spent on a program. Yet, for years private charities have exemplified compassion by operating programs that have helped fight poverty with an efficient and cost-effective manner. The charitable tax credit is one small part of a larger agenda of non-government solutions pushed by the Renewal Alliance. Both empower individuals, break the bureaucracy and encourage private charities to lead the fight against poverty. It is a strategy that is a proven winner.

CONGRESSMAN JIM KOLBE

With the introduction of the Kolbe/Knollenberg charitable tax credit bill early in the 104th Congress, Congressman Kolbe focused on legislative initiatives that shift the welfare pendulum back toward charities, families, and community organizations. The charitable tax credit takes the next step in reforming our welfare program by giving taxpayers a voice in how to deliver services in their communities, and de-emphasizes the impersonal public welfare bureaucracy. Private charities and community organizations have not only provided effective assistance, but hands-on attention to each recipient. The Renewal Alliance does not stop with welfare reform—it goes beyond reform to restore hope and purpose for every family and community. Our measure of service should not be how many families receive food stamps or a government check, but how many families return to the workforce and live out the American dream.

SENATOR JON L. KYL

The need to repair our deteriorating culture has become obvious to most Americans. Although government must play a role, we must remember that genuine cultural revival can only occur through the actions of private citizens. Over the years, people have subcontracted more and more responsibilities to government, and now realize that it isn't working. Americans are ready to take back responsibility for themselves and their communities, as they had before the era of big government. We should develop policies to encourage and accelerate this process.

CONGRESSMAN DAVID MCINTOSH

As a leader of House Republicans since 1994, Congressman McIntosh has worked tirelessly to strengthen families and provide real help to America's poor by removing governmental barriers. The Renewal Alliance provides a unique opportunity to further Representative McIntosh's agenda of restoring the family as the centerpiece of our community. Paramount in this effort will be a strive to reverse inequities in the tax code that hurt women and families. He will also focus on promoting as American Heroes those individuals and non-governmental groups that actively engage in renewing their community.

CONGRESSMAN RON PACKARD

Over the past thirty years, Washington hasn't helped America's families. It has destroyed them. Yet every social problem, no matter how severe, continues to be resolved somewhere—not by a bureaucrat behind a desk, but by some religious or community group empowered by people who care. As Members of Congress, we can tell these remarkable stories and remind Washington what the rest of America has long known—that it takes something more than a government program to change a life. The Renewal Alliance is taking a bold step away from the “Washington knows best” mentality, and empowers those institutions that have made America strong—faith, family, work and community.

CONGRESSMAN CHARLES “CHIP” PICKERING

As a husband and father of four children, I am concerned about the mountain of debt being placed on the backs of families, and the moral decay that is running rampant through our society. It is time that we return to a belief in right and wrong. I believe the best way to deal with the problems facing our country is to look away from government solutions and begin to find community, charitable and faith-based solutions that are rooted in our common values. That is why I am enthusiastic about the Renewal Alliance and the ideas that we are promoting, such as less government, more freedom, personal responsibility, and local-level solutions.

CONGRESSMAN JOSEPH R. PITTS

I believe that the most effective methods of repairing civil society come from the indigenous neighborhood organizations that offer solutions to problems of poverty and human suffering. Public officials also have the responsibility to highlight these success stories. As an Executive Member of the Renewal Alliance (RA), I am committed to involving community-based groups in the Alliance's efforts to promote social, economic, and cultural renewal. I believe that, as a Members of Congress, the bully pulpit of federal office can be used to validate these small organizations.

To that end, I have fought to eliminate legislative and regulatory barriers that hinder the effectiveness of grassroots groups. Additionally, in the fall of 1997, I held a Community Hope Summit in his district to provide 200 grassroots leaders with tools to help them raise private funds, write a public relations plan, recruit volunteers, and develop outcomes measurements. Leadership in this area has raised the status these vital groups, and has helped others recognize the value of community-based nonprofit organizations

CONGRESSMAN FRANK RIGGS

Representative Riggs is Chairman of the House Education Committee's Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families. Riggs sponsored the Low-Income School Choice Demonstration Act—an integral part of the Community renewal Act—which was designed to provide enhanced educational opportunities and school choice to students in America's most impoverished cities. Riggs, a former police officer and school board president, will focus much of his education subcommittee's work on the problems facing parents, students and educators in America's urban areas.

CONGRESSMAN JAMES E. ROGAN

As a former gang-murder prosecutor and criminal trial court judge, I have seen the scourge of violence and drugs in our neighborhoods from the front lines. I have seen how communities falter when business and industry leave for greener pastures. But I have also seen what a difference the time, energy, and love of concerned citizens can make in the lives of our neighbors. We must not cease in this battle to recapture our communities.

Solving local problems requires local experts, not Washington insiders. By moving government in the direction of individual empowerment—not enrollment—we can all contribute to community renewal and investment for our future. Our best efforts, however, are only the beginning. Those working day-after-day in our communities know best what works and what does not. It is now time to give them the autonomy, support, and encouragement to make our communities and our nation a better place.

SENATOR RICK SANTORUM

I am honored to be a sponsor of the Renewal Alliance legislative initiative, REAL Life, which I believe will do more to assist those suffering from poverty, addiction, crime, abuse and neglect than any legislative initiative offered in decades. This approach, which addresses the breakdown of families, communities and values, will bring about the most radical shift from government dependency to self-sufficiency since welfare reform.

It is our objective to rebuild lives and communities by promoting non-governmental solutions to human problems—to empower families, communities, businesses, churches, synagogues, and charities in their efforts to reweave the social fabric of inner-city neighborhoods. We believe that by concentrating on education reform, economic empowerment, and the renewal of community institutions, we can help cities, and their poorest inhabitants gain their share of America's prosperity, pursue happiness, and live the American dream.

We recognize that the federal government is not the solution, but that it has a role to play. Top-down, government-run programs are not as responsive, efficient or effective as community-based, and community-owned initiatives. However, government can strengthen and facilitate charities, it can encourage caring, and it can empower families and communities to care for their own.

CONGRESSMAN MARK SOUDER

As Republican Staff Director of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, and later as Deputy Chief of Staff to Senator Coats, Mark Souder traveled the country to learn firsthand how people in low-income areas addressed problems that were tearing apart their communities—substance abuse, lack of affordable housing, inadequate education and the absence of fathers, to name a few. Souder worked closely with grassroots leaders of the empowerment movement to advance solutions that were proven to work. Now, as Chairman of the newly formed Subcommittee on Empowerment, Congressman Souder looks forward to applying the principles of empowerment to remove the barriers to economic opportunity that keep too many Americans in a cycle of poverty and despair.

CONGRESSMAN JAMES TALENT

A leader in the fight to reform our failing welfare system, Jim Talent was tasked by the Republican leadership to look at the next step in rebuilding our nations' low-income communities. He and Representative Watts talked with hundreds of community leaders nationwide to find out how the federal government could stop hurting home-grown solutions and start government that supports, rather than replaces, vital community institutions: faith, family, work, and community. Out of this grew the Saving Our Children: the American Community Renewal Act, H.R. 3467, designed to create stronger economic foundations, support stable families, and empower faith-based institutions.

CONGRESSMAN ZACH WAMP

A compassionate, conservative approach must include a new agenda anchored in the principles of faith, family and freedom. Simply opposing the failed welfare programs of the Great Society is not enough. I believe that the real work will be to replace these social experiments with legislation designed to strengthen great American institutions like the family, charities, free enterprise and limited government.

CONGRESSMAN J. C. WATTS

Representative Watts was asked by the Republican leadership to look at the next step to welfare reform in rebuilding our nations low-income communities. He and Representative Talent talked with hundreds of community leaders nationwide to find out how the federal government could stop hurting home-grown solutions and start helping them. What they heard was the need for moral and economic renewal and a government that supports rather than replaces vital community institutions: faith, family, work, and community. Out of this grew the American Community Renewal Act (H.R. 1031), designed to create stronger economic foundations, support stable families, and empower faith-based institutions.